

In The Claims:

Please cancel claims 1, 2 and 7 without prejudice and subject to Applicants' right to pursue these claims in related applications, and amend claims 3, 8 and 9 so that the claims hereafter read as follows:

1. (Canceled)
2. (Canceled)
3. (Currently Amended) A system according to claim 8 ~~2~~ wherein said virtual character further comprises a sensory capability for sensing other virtual elements within said virtual environment.
4. (Previously Presented) A system according to claim 3 wherein said sensory capability is configured to sense the presence of other virtual elements within said virtual environment.
5. (Previously Presented) A system according to claim 3 wherein said sensory capability is configured to sense the motion of other virtual elements within said virtual environment.
6. (Previously Presented) A system according to claim 4 wherein said sensory capability is configured to sense a characteristic of other virtual elements within said virtual environment.

7. (Canceled)

8. (Currently Amended) A system for presenting ~~comprising~~  
a virtual world to a user, the system comprising:

a virtual environment;

a plurality of virtual elements within said virtual environment, each of said virtual elements being capable of interacting with other of said virtual elements within the virtual environment; and

user controls for enabling a user to interact with at least one of said virtual elements within said virtual environment;

wherein the plurality of virtual elements comprise at least two virtual characters each comprising a behavior state, an emotion state and a learning state, and wherein said behavior state, said emotion state and said learning state are capable of changing in response to (i) interaction with other virtual elements within the virtual environment, and/or (ii) commands from said user input controls; and

wherein said virtual environment is configured so that additional virtual elements can be introduced into said virtual environment, with the additional virtual elements being capable of interacting with one another and the plurality of virtual elements;

and further wherein each virtual character comprises a blackboard data structure which acts as a repository for selected pieces of data associated with that virtual character's behavior state, emotion state and learning state and which permits other virtual characters to access those selected pieces of data associated with the ~~a subset of that~~ virtual character's behavior

state, emotion state and learning state, whereby to enrich  
~~enhance~~ the level of interaction between the characters.

9. (Currently Amended) A system for presenting ~~comprising~~  
a virtual world to a user, the system comprising:

a virtual environment;

a plurality of virtual elements within said virtual  
environment, each of said virtual elements being capable of  
interacting with other of said virtual elements within the  
virtual environment; and

user controls for enabling a user to interact with at least  
one of said virtual elements within said virtual environment;

wherein at least one of said virtual elements comprises a  
virtual character comprising a behavior state, an emotion state  
and a learning state, and wherein said behavior state, said  
emotion state and said learning state are capable of changing in  
response to (i) interaction with other virtual elements within  
the virtual environment, and/or (ii) commands from said user  
input controls; and

wherein said virtual environment is configured so that  
additional virtual elements can be introduced into said virtual  
environment;

wherein the additional virtual elements comprise a behavior  
state, an emotion state and a learning state, and wherein the  
behavior state, emotion state and learning state of the  
additional virtual elements are capable of changing in response  
to (i) interaction with other virtual elements within the virtual  
environment, and/or (ii) commands from said user input controls;

and further wherein the additional virtual elements are  
capable of being recognized by the virtual elements previously

existing within the virtual environment, with the additional virtual elements being capable of interacting with one another and the plurality of virtual elements;

wherein the virtual world further comprises an audio-visual component for displaying audio and visual manifestations of the virtual world to the user;

wherein the audio-visual component comprises an animation engine for controlling ~~driving~~ the animated display of the virtual world and an audio engine for controlling ~~driving~~ audio output for the virtual world;

and further wherein the audio-visual component is configured such that the audio engine may control ~~drive~~ the animation engine.

10. (Previously Presented) The system in accordance with claim 9 wherein the audio-visual component comprises at least one camera for determining a selected view of the virtual world, and further wherein the camera comprises a virtual character comprising a behavior state, an emotion state and a learning state, and wherein said behavior state, said emotion state and said learning state of the camera are capable of changing in response to (i) interaction with other virtual elements within the virtual environment, and/or (ii) commands from said user input controls.